

Return to soccer

It is always a good idea to get a pre-participation physical by your doctor prior to starting a sport. This is particularly important if you have recently had a new injury or change in health status.

Returning to physical activity and conditioning following an extended off-period should include a gradual increase in the time and intensity of exercise, as well as including a timeframe for heat acclimatization. Heat acclimatization typically takes place over a period of 7-14 days. The acclimatization period is most effective after athletes have effectively increased their level of conditioning after the athlete has returned to his/her pre-COVID baseline.

Soccer is a difficult sport because it requires high levels of endurance, stamina, coordination, balance and skill. When returning to any level of play, one must consider his/her "match-fitness" regarding a full resumption of open play. Lack of fitness in any one of the aforementioned categories may result in injury. Due to COVID-19, many soccer players have been forced to forgo normal team activities, including practices and games. Below is a routine, which can be performed individually to help gradually prepare youth for return to soccer.

Start

- 10-minute jog

Warm-up

- High knees
- Butt kicks
- High kicks to hand
- Inverted toe touch: Standing on one leg, lean forward and try to touch your toes while slowly raising your opposite leg straight behind you.
- Open the gate: Alternating legs, raise one knee to your chest and then "open your hip" out to the side and take two shuffle steps to the direction of the leg you performed it on.
- Close the gate: the reverse of the above exercise. Begin with leg out to the side and raise it up, "closing your hip." Finish with two shuffle steps in the opposite direction of the leg you performed the repetition on.
- Skips
- Side shuffling
- Carioca: Side shuffling with alternating the trailing leg being brought in front of the body and behind the body rotating the hips to accommodate the motion.
- Five-minute jog

Strengthening

- Squats
- Front lunges — walking forward
- Side lunges — back and forth in place
- Reverse lunges — walking backward
- Heel raises — double leg
- 5-minute jog

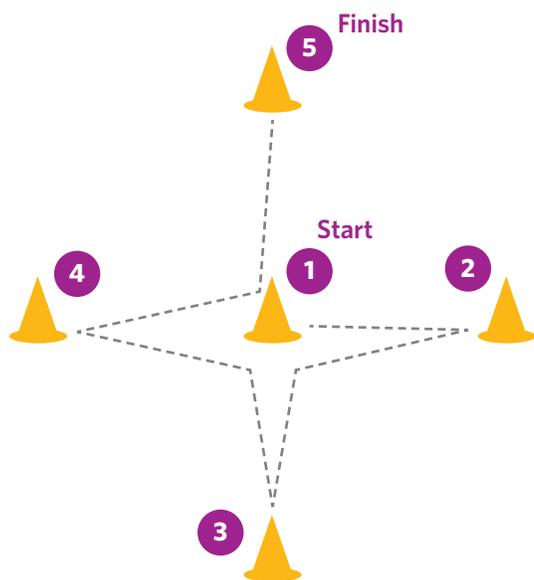
Conditioning

• Skaters over ball

Begin with one foot on the ball and one foot off the ball. Then in a controlled fashion, jump over the ball switching legs as you land so that your opposite leg is now on the ball.

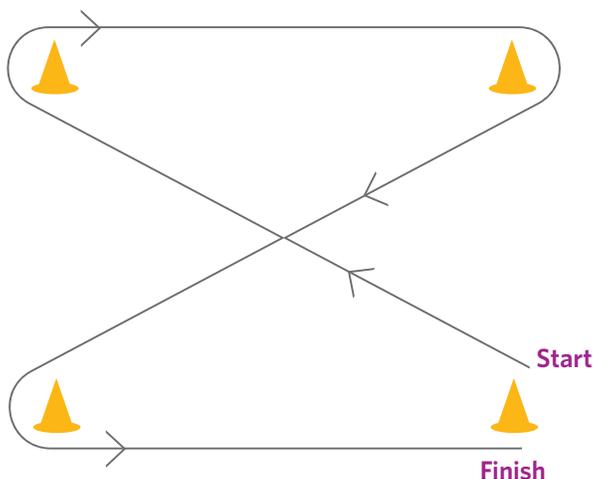
• Drill A "Cross"

Place cones 10 feet in front, behind and to both sides of your body. Start in the center then (1) Side shuffle to right (2) then back to cone (1). Backpedal to cone (3), sprint to cone (1). Side shuffle to left (4), and back to cone (1). Sprint to the front cone (5) then backpedal to the starting position (1).



• Drill B "Rectangle"

Place four cones (or pick four points) in the shape of a rectangle, on a corner and run to the opposite corner. Without stopping, cut quickly to the cone just lateral to the cone you just ran to. After reaching this cone cut and run to the cone opposite it. When reaching this cone, cut and run to the starting cone.



• Drill C

Using a line of cones, zig-zag in between them emphasizing the cutting and changing direction moment. After reaching the final cone, backpedal through the cones emphasizing turning the hips.

- Five-minute jog

Dribbling

- Both feet dribbling through cones
- Right foot only dribbling through cones
- Left foot only dribbling through cones
- Roll-over right foot
- Roll-over left foot
- 10-minute cool-down jog



Tailor this routine as needed, decreasing or increasing the amount of repetitions performed of each exercise/drill. The goals of this program are to help improve the athlete's aerobic endurance and general lower body strength; re-integrate the athlete into dynamic sports-specific directional changes; and practice the motor plans required for dynamic/skilled ball movements.

Additionally, be sure to adhere to your organization's rules on preventing the spread of COVID-19 to ensure the safety of others.



If you have any questions about returning to soccer safely, please email

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